

QUEEN ANNE HOUSE AND CROWN COURT

Queen Anne House

This short length of Middle Street is all that survives of a great section that joined the rest of Middle Street at King Street. Probably the finest building here is Queen Anne House, a Historic Building of Kent. The earliest reference to it is in 1736, when it was leased from the Archbishop of Canterbury. It was built around 1710 in the Queen Anne style. This refers to the English Baroque architecture of the time of Queen Anne, who reigned from 1702-14.

The house is built of red brick and has a Flemish or Dutch gable end on its southern wall, matching a similar one on the next house. These gables were a feature of Renaissance architecture which arrived in Britain from the Low Countries in the late 16th century. They are commonly found on buildings in East Kent; many are recorded in Deal, Sandwich and Thanet.



The Dutch or Flemish gable on the building next to Queen Anne House, 1960s.

Credit: Dover Museum. d34999



The 17th-century Port Arms pub, photographed by H Meakins, around 1900. Like many of the pubs in Deal, the Port Arms was a notorious haunt for smuggling activity until the end of the 19th century.

The house was Deal Orphanage from the mid-19th century, set up by Miss Catherine Boys, a Catholic convert. In 1871, she was joined by nuns who left France after the Franco-Prussian war. They helped run the orphanage until Catherine's death in 1872. Continuing her work, in 1878 they bought Turret House on West Street and turned it into St Ethelberga's School. This later became a convent.

In later years, the house was a boarding house and then apartments. It could have been demolished in the 1960s as part of the Allen plan, which proposed modernising parts of Deal.

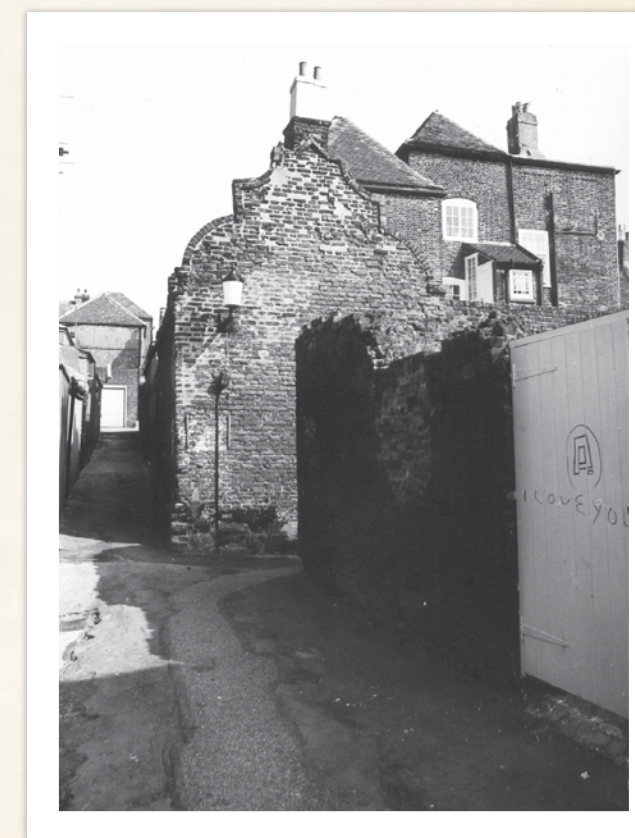
However, the Deal Protection Society organised a campaign against the plans and the then owner of Queen Anne House, Margaret Dolores Haslam, donated £100 to the fund. Their campaign was successful and in 1968 the Middle Street area of Deal became a Conservation Area, the first in Kent.

Opposite Queen Anne House is Stonar House, built in 1780. Now two residences, it was originally one large property. Most of the other houses on the seaward side of the street are also of 17th- and 18th-century date and have kept interesting and original features.

Credit: Colin Verrill

Old alleys

Running down the north side of Queen Anne House is South Court, which was previously known as Jews Harp Alley. It supposedly got its original name from its curious shape, rather like that of the Jew's Harp musical instrument. The alley, like most others in Deal, is very narrow. Most of its original houses have long gone, except for 1A South Court which dates from the 17th century. The 1841 census shows that it would have been very overcrowded. Ninety-eight people lived in 19 houses. Most of the male inhabitants were



Jews Harp Alley, around 1983.

mariners, fishermen or boatmen, indicating their strong connection with the sea. By the 1939 register, taken when the Second World War broke out, only seven people lived in four houses here.

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The Cinque Ports

The Port Arms bears the heraldic banner of the Cinque Ports, denoting Deal's membership of the confederation as a limb of Sandwich. The Cinque Ports date back 1000 years and comprise of five coastal towns in south-east England: Sandwich, Dover, Hythe, New Romney and Hastings. At its peak in the late Middle Ages, the confederation had more than 40 members.

Another narrow alleyway, Crown Court, leads from Middle Street towards Beach Street, emerging near the King's Head inn. The King's Head was built possibly as early as 1721 and was a smugglers' haunt. One of its landladies, the Widow Petty, is listed as part-owner of a boat seized by Customs in 1852 containing 1200lbs of smuggled tobacco.

Pubs and smuggling

Close by the King's Head, on Beach Street, is The Port Arms, which dates to the late 17th century. This was also a smugglers haunt. Records from 1813 indicate that Customs officers seized a boat on the beach at the south end of Deal and recovered smuggled spirits. A number of smugglers came out of the Port Arms, violently assaulted and obstructed the officers, and forcibly took away the casks of spirits.

Deal Borough Records show that in 1776 both the Port Arms and the King's Head refused to billet Dragoons (members of a cavalry regiment, who had been sent to combat smuggling in the town) citing a lack of suitable accommodation.

It was originally formed for military and trade purposes. As a limb, Deal had to provide ships and men when needed. The town also shared in the privileges of the confederation. One of these was the 'Rights of flotsam, jetsam and ligam' which meant the right to keep the debris and cargo of wrecked ships.


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